

Claim 14 has been amended to clarify that the colored material defines an exterior surface of a vehicle body panel and the polymeric material with the spaced reinforcing material is deformable in a predetermined manner in response to an impact force. As discussed above, this is not shown in Billing '215. Claim 16 has been amended to clarify that the reinforcing fibers are orientated into the reinforcing material in laterally spaced rows across the vehicle body panel.

Thus, Applicant believes that all claims are allowable over the prior art, and an early indication of such is earnestly solicited. A check is enclosed to cover the cost of one additional independent claim and one additional dependent claim. The Commissioner is authorized to charge Deposit Account No. 50-1482 in the name of Carlson, Gaskey & Olds for any additional fees or credit the account for any overpayment.

Respectfully submitted,

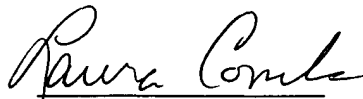


KERRIE A. LABA
Registration No. 42,777
Attorneys for Applicant
Carlson, Gaskey & Olds
400 West Maple, Suite 350
Birmingham, Michigan 48009
(248) 988-8360

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CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I hereby certify that the enclosed Amendment is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first-class mail, postage prepaid, in an envelope addressed to Assistant Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks, Washington, D.C. 20231, on this 23 day of October, 2001.



Laura Combs

Claims 1 and 2 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Billing ('215). Claim 1 has been amended to correct a typographical error where the word "panel" was inadvertently used instead of the term "sheet of material". Claim 1 is directed toward a vehicle body panel that includes the feature of spaced reinforcement on a sheet of material such that the panel crumples in a predetermined manner. Billing '215 does not disclose such a panel.

First, Billing '215 is not directed toward a vehicle body panel. The panel in Billing is used to cover underground utility wells with openings to a surface road so that cars can drive on the panel and over the well opening without damaging the vehicle. The panel must exhibit high strength to withstand static and dynamic loads from heavy vehicular traffic. See col. 1, lines 15-25.

Second, the panel in Billings '215 does not crumple in a predetermined manner. The panel in Billing does not crumple at all. If the panel in Billing crumpled under a high impact load then vehicles could partially fall into the underground utility well, possibly causing a serious injury accident.

Claims 3, 14, 10, 11, 15, and 16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Billing '215. With regard to claims 3 and 14 the Examiner argues that it "would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to modify the disclosure of Billing to specifically include a colored sheet of material to the outside of the panel to enhance it's appearance." Applicant respectfully traverses this argument. It would not be obvious to add a colored sheet of material to a panel that is simply used to cover up holes in the ground so that vehicles can drive over the holes. Thus, there is no reason to enhance the appearance of the Billing panel.

With regard to claims 10 and 11 the Examiner argues that the use of paintless film and pre-painted aluminum are common knowledge and that it would be obvious to use such material in Billing '215. As discussed above, there is no reason to use such material in Billing '215.

APPENDIX A

1. (Amended) A vehicle body panel comprising:
a sheet of material; and
spaced reinforcement on said sheet of material [panel] such that said panel crumples in a predetermined manner.

14. (Amended) A vehicle body panel comprising:
a polymeric material reinforced with a spaced reinforcing material on one side;
and
a colored material attached to an opposed side of said reinforced polymeric material wherein said colored material defines an exterior surface of a vehicle body panel
and said polymeric material with said spaced reinforcing material is deformable in a predetermined manner in response to an impact force.

16. (Amended) The body panel of claim 15 wherein said colored material and said polymeric [sheet] material [is] are molded together to form a vehicle body panel and wherein said reinforcing fibers are [molded] orientated into said [sheet] reinforcing material in laterally spaced rows across the vehicle body panel.